Syphilis claims many victims. 000

Although probably based on superstitious fear, the custom of the Hottentots of destroying a hut after a death has occurred in it and rebuilding it somewhere else on new ground is of great practical hygienic value. 768

Capitulum II

The Hut and Handicrafts

A. The Hut

The hut, o·mi, of the Hottentots is characteristic of nomadic housing. 342
It is airy, yet protected against wind and sun, light in weight, [228] simple in material and in construction and therefore easy to take down, pack up and rebuild in another place.

1. Material and Construction

a) The framework of the hut is best made of thorn tree wood because of its elasticity. Next to be used is the more brittle hakjes (Acacia detinens Burch.) thorn. Other woods are used only as a last resort. [824]

The dome shape of the hut demands that the framework of the hut have a definite curve.* The freshly polled and trimmed branch (about

*This curve is the basis of a Hottentot designation for rainbow as tertium comparationis: */a·bi!ha·/nab, i.e. "rain hut-pole."

5 centimeters across at the base) is placed flat on the ground. One end and the middle are weighted down by heavy stones. The free end is bent and braced against a stone block and kept in this position until the wood has dried and therefore stays bent. Or they place the branches in bundles upright in the ground, tie the free ends together, bend them down and hold them with a strap which is anchored to the ground. [Picture. Framework of a Hut].

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date)-1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama
Cape Hottentots

The funeral over, everybody returned to the kraal. Here, according to Kolb, the men and the women again squatted apart in front of the hut, repeating their wailing and frequently calling on the dead person by name. At last silence fell, and the oldest of the men arose, entered the circle first of the men and then of the women, and besprinkled them with his urine. Then he entered the hut through the door, took some ashes from the hearth, came out through the opening previously made in the back, and strewed the ashes over all the people, who rubbed them into their bodies. Some of the near relatives also took cowdung and smeared it over their arms, legs and body. Then they all separated and went to their huts. The family of the deceased, however, did not dare to enter the hut where he had died, but sought accommodation with other people.

On the following day all the huts in the kraal were taken down and the people left the locality; but the hut of the dead person was left standing with all its belongings. Nothing might be taken from it. Before the departure, the heir of the dead person slaughtered a sheep, and such of the other near relatives as could afford it did the same. All who had been present at the funeral were then feasted with this meat. The caul of the sheep he had slaughtered was thickly strewn with *buchu*, twisted into a cord, and hung round the neck of the heir, where he had to wear it until it rotted away. The other relatives likewise hung about their necks the cauls of the sheep they had killed. Poor relatives, if they could not afford to slaughter an animal and hence were unable to procure a caul, shaved their heads in furrowed ridges as a sign that they too were in mourning.

It is uncertain from Kolb's account just which people were expected to mourn, and whether the signs of mourning varied according to the relationship of the mourners to the deceased. An earlier description speaks of all the men of a large kraal having their heads shaved as a sign of mourning, but as the dead person concerned was their chief, the usage in this case may not have been the one customary in ordinary deaths.[1] At the same time, there is nothing to indicate whether the funerary rites for chiefs differed in any way from those for commoners. There is also no clear indication how long the period of mourning lasted, and whether any special prohibitions and other usages had to be observed by the mourners during this period. Kolb simply says that the lamentations might be kept up for three or four days or even a week after the death, but throws no further light on the question.

[1] Godée-Molsbergen, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika*, i, 209.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

It may be noticed here that the removal of the
kraal from the place of death, as mentioned by Kolb and the other writers on the Cape Hottentots, does not now take place among the Naman. Some of Mrs. Hoernlé's informants stated that in the early days of their recollection the hut of the dead person was always moved to some other part of the camp,[1] whereas nowadays the hut as a rule is not moved at all; and this latter point Mrs. Hoernlé was able to confirm from personal observation.

The widow takes no part in the rites just described—" she doesn't belong to the man's family," said one of Mrs. Hoernlé's informants indignantly in reply to a question. But from the moment the death has taken place she has become */nau*, and must observe the restrictions attendant upon this condition. How long she remains */nau* Mrs. Hoernlé could not ascertain. According to some informants, several days may elapse between the burial and the final cleansing, while on the other hand the cleansing is often done immediately after the burial. During the interval, whether it is long or short, the widow must not touch uncooked meat or cold water, go among the cattle, or handle the pots. She is tended by one or more elderly widows, not relatives of either man or wife, who take her through the purification rites when the time comes. First she is thoroughly cleansed from head to foot with moist cowdung, then her whole body is rubbed with a mixture of fat and red mineral powder, and the hair is cut from the top of her head. In cutting off a bit of her hair, they spit on the end of it, and say, " The next husband you get must be a lucky one, and get him quickly." She also puts on a complete set of new clothes. All this time there is a pot on the fire in the hut with a small piece of meat in it which the old woman has fetched from the cooking pots. She takes some of the black from this pot, and puts a mark under each eye, " so that everything the widow meets may be nice to her," and also on the chest, " so that her food may go down nicely." The meat in the pot is eaten by the old woman. The hair cut off is mixed with the ash of the fire, and the whole then removed from the hut and a fre[illegible]e. The next morning the widow takes the contents of [illegible]'s stomach, and together with the old woman, who goes [illegible] scatters them over the cattle kraals, saying " let there be plenty of milk ". Then follows the milking of a cow, the fetching of wood, and finally the reintroduction to water, all as in the case of the girls' puberty ceremony.

[1] *Cf.* Shaw, *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1821, p. lxxvii; Schultze, *op. cit.*, 227.

3: Hoernlé E-5 (1912-1913) 1918 FX13 Hottentot FX13
Narna

Hannah said none of the people who had treated him so far had had the disease badly enough, hence all the attempted cures had failed. It is interesting to note here that this !nomI hêip has to be treated with great deference. It is the root, which is astringent, (somewhat like ginger), which is used. When a person comes to the bush, before digging he must put down a bracelet, or a bead, or some little thing. If he fails to do so, the root will simply disappear. Later, if he divides it among his friends, the same process takes place; each must give some little thing for the piece received. I was warned to do the same when I received a piece lest all the virtue leave the root, even if it did not itself wholly disappear.

However it may be with the 'sacramental' meal, the purification meal certainly takes place when the fire is cleaned away and renewed. The reintroduction to the duties of life also takes place in the usual manner.

Peter Kolben, writing at the beginning of the 18th century, states that "if a Hottentot, man or woman, recovers of a dangerous sickness, 'andersmaken' is performed by killing, for the entertainment of the kraal, a head of great or small cattle, according to the circumstances of the family"[2]. This may be a feast similar to the one in which all partake when the ǂaxais leaves her kharú óms.

The purification of the survivors after a death. The series of rites connected with death have perhaps undergone more disintegration than any of the others described. They have been telescoped, as it were, into one another, so that often enough as many of them as remain are all carried out on the same day, after the burial is over. The old witsigi, of whom Kolben is the earliest and the most detailed on this point, state quite definitely that the hut of a deceased person was left standing with all the belongings, and that the camp or kraal was moved. My informers state that in the earlier days of their recollection the hut was always moved to some other part of the camp, whereas nowadays the hut as a rule is not moved at all. Several deaths occurred while I was at Walfish Bay, and one while I was in Berseba, and in none of these cases was the hut moved. Yet where an animal is to be had the feast takes place, and in any case the cleansing is done even now. After a death not only the immediate relatives are affected, but also the larger family circle, and there are interesting things to note in each case. If it is a husband who has died, the wife becomes !nau, but his relatives, brothers, sisters, parents, have also to perform certain rites before the ceremonial meal, and in a lesser degree all members of the kraal who take part in the proceedings. It will be as well to describe these purification rites before attending to the widow.

When the people come back from the grave, they all wash their hands in cold water

[2] Kolben's Hottentots. A translation from the High German by Medley,' London, 1738, p. 313. (The High German version is itself a translation of P. Kolbe, Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum, Nuremberg, 1719).

764 which is placed in front of the dead man's house. In the old days they wailed and
[171] writhed in lamentation. Nowadays they sing hymns. In Berseba where a man died late in the afternoon, hymns were sung right through the night and all the morning until the burial by the missionary took place. Meantime the man's relatives slaughter animals according to their means, and collect the blood separately into one or more pots. The entrails are collected in other pots, and the meat in yet others; all the different families
[278] who are taking part providing pots. The blood is heated to boiling point, and the herb called //gànab is mixed in with it. A chopper, *!ôp*, which has been heated red hot is
[412] then stirred round in it to make the steam rise. The immediate relatives of the man [a]— men, women, and children — collect round the pots and cover their heads with their skins
[302] so that they perspire (*suaqn*). Then an old man, who is related neither to the man nor to the woman, takes potblack and makes a line on the stomach of each person — "to prevent their getting pains from eating the food", says !Amatis. The sweating is done in the dead person's hut, and so is the putting on of the black line and the eating. The relatives eat only of the flesh, other members of the kraal eating the entrails, while the blood can be used only by the officiating person and others of like age. In Berseba I was told that the line on the stomach was made with the blood, not with the potblack. Some informers say the sweating is done in the hut, others say outside. Unfortunately in the cases which I witnessed myself the people were too badly off to have meat at all, and there was simply
[593] coffee drinking. The widow takes no part in these rites at all. "She doesn't belong to the man's family", one informant said indignantly when I asked.

● 768 How long the widow remained !nau, I do not know. One informant says, "Even to this day, after the death of a husband, or child, a woman won't use cold water for a few days". But the cleansing is often done immediately after the burial. Formerly, according to Gottlief and others, it was done sometime after the burial when the hut had been rebuilt in another spot. Other remarks show that even now some time may elapse between the burial and the cleansing, for another informant tells me that if a widow were obliged for some reason to go from the shore in Walfish Bay to an inland settlement, she would
[784] on no account take the path through the valuable !naras plants, but would go by the desert path where no vegetation of any sort is to be found.

During the interval, whether it be long or short, the widow must not touch uncooked meat or cold water, go among the cattle, or handle the pots. She is tended by one or more elderly widows, not relatives of either man or wife, who take her through the
[278] purification rites when the time comes. First she is cleaned from head to foot with ≠houp or, on the Orange River, with a brew made from a species of euphorbia, or, in Walfish

[a] None of the woman's relatives take part in this ceremony.

3: Hoernlé E-5 (1912-1913) 1918 FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

Bay, where there are no cattle nowadays, with ground !naras pips, goats' dung, and fat. Next, her whole body is rubbed with !naop, and the hair is cut from the top of her head. In cutting off a bit of her hair, they spit on the end of it and say, "The next husband you get must be a lucky one, and get him quickly." The woman also puts on a complete set of new clothes.

All this time there is a pot on the fire in the hut with a small piece of meat in it which the old woman has fetched from the cooking pots. She takes some of the black from this pot, and puts a mark under each eye, "so that everything the widow meets may be nice to her", and also on the chest, "so that her food may go down nicely". The meat in the pot is eaten by the old woman. The hair which was cut off is mixed with the ash of the fire, and the whole is then removed from the hut and a fresh fire made. The next morning the widow will take the */drap*, "contents of the animal's stomach", and, together with the old woman, who goes in front, will scatter them over the cattle kraals saying, "*delba /aba*", "let there be plenty of milk". There follows the milking of a cow, the reintroduction to water, the fetching of wood, just as in the case of the ǂaχais.[1] The water ceremony was described to me as follows by !Kabes. First the old woman sprinkles the widow with water saying "*Xaré dama kaure ≠aba ≠abare*", "don't get thin, get fat like the ≠aba onion". Then they go together to the spring, where the old woman takes a stick, beats the water, and scatters it on the widow. She also dips her hand in the water, and sprinkles the widow's face and her whole body. Finally she puts clay on her legs saying again, "Xaré dama kaure ≠aba ≠abare", and, filling the water pot, *//ho-ǂs*, she sets it on the widow's head. Then they go home.

If it is a woman who has died, the treatment of the husband is much the same, but Gottlief gave me a few additional details. After the husband has been cleaned, two cuts are made on his forehead, and *//ubus*[2] juice is rubbed in. In the old days, as mentioned above, the cut was made with the //gurûs, a new piece being broken off for each occasion. The widower's hair is cut from the back of the head, also with the //gurûs. Before he has been cleaned in this way he must not leave the hut. After the hut has been cleaned, some dabi and //ganab tree branches are soaked in water over night. Next morning the widower and his attendant go out among the cattle and sheep, and sprinkle them with this water.

When a child has died, both parents become !nau, and have to be dealt with similarly.

* * *

I am fully aware how incomplete and indefinite these notes are in many details. It may well be that there is still some chance of filling in the gaps, especially for some

[2] A small shrub with astringent leaves.

[1] [i.e. A young marriageable woman. See cat. 116, pp. 72 ff. – Analyst]

14:Hahn L-5 (ca. 1870-1880) 1881 FX13 Hottentot FX13

All the Khoikhoi tribes use the expression *Taras* for woman. We have still the name of *Tradouw*—*i.e.*, *Tara-daob*—for a mountain-pass not far from Swellendam. *Taras* is the woman, as ruler of the house, the mistress; it is exactly the Middle-High-German *vrouwe*. The root *da* or ta means to conquer, to rule, to master, and the suffix *ra* expresses a custom or an intrinsic peculiarity. *Taras* is also a woman of rank, *a lady*. In every Khoikhoi's house the woman, or *taras*, is the *supreme ruler;* the husband has nothing at all to say. While in public the men take the prominent part, at home they have not so much power even as to take a mouthful of sour milk out of the tub, without the wife's permission. If a man ever should try to do it, his nearest female relations will put a fine on him, consisting in cows and sheep, which is to be added to the stock of the wife. In the house the wife always occupies the right side of the husband and the right side of the house.

If a chief died, it often happened that his energetic wife became the gau-tās (contracted from gautaras), the ruling woman—*i.e.*, the queen of the tribe—in place of the son who was not of age. Thus, the name of an old queen, Xam|hās, who ruled the Cauquas (|Khauas) at the time of Simon van der Stell, in the present Worcester district, in the valleys of the Breede river, has been handed down to us, and her descendants now live on the outskirts of the Kalihari, where they still rule the tribe, who left the Colony seventy years ago. I mean the Xam|ha, or so-called Amraal-family, ruling the Gei-|Khauas of Gobabis. Here I must mention a peculiar old custom common to all Khoikhoi tribes, and which proves how well the conjugal ties were already established before the Khoikhoi separation. All the daughters are called after the father and all the sons after the mother. Thus, if the father is *Xam|ha-b* and the mother is ‡*Arises*, the sons are—

1. ‡Ariseb geib—*i.e.*, ‡Arise the big one, or the oldest ‡Arise.